

Interview with Jacob Risser Lehman, Jr
December 11, 2024

Alan: Do you know why your grandfather (Benjamin Lehman) moved from Pennsylvania to Fentress?

Jake: Yeah, he went broke. He married a woman with money and he got into race horses and he was into gambling. He spent everything he had, but her brother said, "you're not going to spend any more of my sister's money", and so he moved down here.

He had three children that were teenagers, or soon to be teenagers, and they decided to move down here to get a fresh start. He's thinking that when they come down here that her brother will turn loose with some money. It didn't happen.

So he bought this farm and borrowed money from Tim Wenger to buy this farm. After they were here, Daddy was born the very year that they moved down in 1912. He was born during the winter and they moved in the summertime.

Then they had one more, Arthur. Arthur owned the farm at the end of the road (Lehman Rd) that the Navy bought. *(This is not true - Arthur was born in 1910, before the move to Virginia)*

Arthur owned the farm at the end of the road (Lehman Rd) here. The Navy bought all except what your daddy (John Keffer) later bought and we bought the rest of that farm out here (from Abram Wenger). From Sharon's house out was part of that farm, but the Navy took most of it. Anyway, they moved down here and Tim Wenger loaned him money but he wasn't a farmer. (Some of the farm had been sold by Abram Wenger to the Hughes family) He made enough to live on, about, near about enough to live on. She (wife - Anna Risser Lehman) stayed here for three or four years. Then she bought, with her money, she bought a little house on Mt Pleasant Rd just west of Lockheed Ave and she moved in there.

They moved down here. My grandpa and grandma moved down here on this farm, 70 some acres. Then they moved down here and they had another son, my dad, after they were here. Sometime later, grandma left grandpa and she moved up there to that house.

Well, then when she died, Arthur got that house. Arthur married Lula Wenger. That's why she ended up with that farm that the Navy bought. Arthur died in 1937. Harold Kephart wanted to buy that farm. She wouldn't sell it to him.

She sold it to Abram Wenger because Abram was her kin, uncle or whatever how that was.

Alan: He would have been a cousin because Abram was her father's brother's son. He would have been a nephew to Tim, a cousin to Lula.

Jake: Okay. First cousin. Okay.

That's how Abram Langer ended up with that farm. Then the Navy bought it and they moved that house up there to where A.V. Hughes lived, moved it up there.

My daddy was working for Yoder Dairy's over in Newport News.

Alan: How did that come about that he went there rather than stay in Fentress?

Jake: Well, he needed a job. That job was open and he went over there. That's when he got married and went over there. I guess about that time. (Early 1930's, married 1934) They lived over there for a couple of years. Then he got an opportunity to come back.

Actually, he paid the farm off. He paid Tim Wenger off. He borrowed money somewhere and paid Tim Wenger off. Then daddy owned the farm.

Alan: I had heard, and maybe it was from you, and I don't remember where now, but somewhere in all my reading and talking to folks, I had heard that Tim Wenger actually came to your dad and asked him would he come back home because his father was having trouble with the farm. Is that right?

Jake: Very easy could be. It probably was. I never knew that. Daddy never told me that. Tim Wenger knew he couldn't make it work. He wasn't a farmer. To be a farmer, you have to love it. You do. What's wrong with me? I just loved it. I can't tell you how in the world I got as much work done as I did.

My daddy would say, if I want something done, just tell Jakey he can't do it. He'll bust the gates of hell to do it. It'll get done.

Anyway, that's how that came about. Then daddy borrowed the money somewhere. Anyway, he paid Tim Wenger off. I'm sure he got it at a bank because Daddy didn't borrow money from or loan money to people. Like he said, he always told me, he said the best way to make an enemy of a friend is either loan him money or borrow from him. You don't do that.

It was good advice for me and it's good advice for anybody. People want to borrow money from me. I ain't got no money to loan. The bank has got plenty of it. They will take all your information and if they don't think you can pay it back or won't pay it back, they're not going to loan it to you. If they loan it to you, they're going to come and get it. If they have to take everything you've got, they're going to get it. You say, well, I feel sorry for you. You've had bad... Well, a lot of bad luck is made by poor choices.

Alan: People who make poor choices too frequently don't stop making poor choices.

Jake: No, they don't. That's right. There was Jimmy Dickerson. He'd do most anything for

anybody. He went to work. He was a milk truck driver and then he went to hanging garage doors. He decided to hang garage doors.

Alan: I didn't remember that.

Jake: He'd get to a job and the job wasn't perfect. He'd just sit down and cry. You've got to think through the problem. There was one guy that was hanging garage doors and he got to the site and the man wanted the door hung. It was a big company. Well, there's a lot. We want this door in here. He went to two gum trees and hung the door between them. That's right. Got paid for hanging the door. The man said, hang the door and we hanged the door. That was me. You call me to the job. I need the money and I'm going to hang your door for you. He got paid by the piece.

But anyway, Daddy bought the farm. He was married and they started having kids. There was never enough money around the house. There were five children born just like stair steps. There was always friction in the house. Did I say there was always friction in the house? It just was. My mother was just like her mother.

Alan: How was that?

Jake: She'd smile to your face and stick you in the back. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Alan: I didn't know her mother. Her mother was Emanuel Troyer's wife?

Jake: Katie. The maddest I ever seen her get was when my dad called her Miss Katie. She knew she was just like her.

If you knew Viola, Viola was a spitting image of her mother. And you don't know Miss Carol very well. But Miss Carol, if you knew Miss Carol, you would know her mother. A spitting image of her. And if you knew her mother, you would know her grandmother. I tell people, I may have told you, I fell in love with her mother before I fell in love with her. She was just very kind, never saw, I never heard her say a cross word. And I will tell you that my wife has never, ever raised her voice at me. She should have sometimes.

But that's another point. It doesn't have to follow that way, but it does a lot of times. Now, my sister Elsie is just as different from Viola. She and I have the same temperament as my dad. Now, my dad could get upset, don't get me wrong. Until he went away to Canada, he had a very colorful vocabulary.

I mean, very. But he went away to Canada and I think...

Alan: That explains something I heard when I was a kid and I didn't understand until right now.. I didn't know your dad that well. There was a school board meeting. I was in elementary school, I don't know, nine, ten years old. Daddy comes home, talking to mom about the school board meeting.

He said, one of the things that came up was some of the students using colorful language. And he said, Jake Lehman stood up and said, "if any of my boys use any language, I want to know about it."

And then daddy made a comment, "he'd probably take them home and cuss them out." And that just never made sense to me, to this day, until right now, because I've just never heard.... The Jake I knew was the Jake after Canada, I think.

Jake: Right, right.

Alan: What happened in Canada?

Jake: In Canada, my daddy got saved. Okay. Now, was he saved? I don't know. But I can tell you he came back a different man. He went up there and...

Alan: How old was he?

Jake: He was mid-sixties before he went up there.

Well, we were partners in a business. And, of course, we had borrowed some money. And the place had never been paid for until March.

March would be two years ago that we finally made the last payment on the farm. Miss Carol and I did. Never got it paid for. We were always paying for it, making another loan, making another mortgage, buy more equipment, buy more cows, buy whatever.

And then that piece of land, Harrison. The Harrison piece came up for sale. I don't want it. I just about got this place paid for. I don't need that. It was a good deal, \$200,000 for 70 acres. Well, Big Ron (Lehman) came along and... "Uncle Jake, I'd like to have that farm, but it's landlocked." He can't buy it. "But I'll buy this piece by my daddy's house and we'll do a land swap." Okay, we'll do a land swap.

So Keith and I spent, I think it was right around \$8,000 for... Well, to get the line erased back between he and I and all the legal fees. And when I give the plat of the piece that he wanted to buy to him, I thought there's more acres in there than that. You said the field beside my daddy's house. That's what it is. Well, I don't want the deal. I don't want the deal.

Now, Keith and I worked as good together as anybody. I mean, whatever I had, he could have. Whatever he had, I could have. Well, I did tell Keith, too. He said, well, you can back out of the deal. I said, no, it ain't right. So we went down and borrowed another \$200,000 and bought the piece of land and added it to what I already owed. And I bought it.

Well, then the Kephart piece came up for sale. And they wanted \$400,000 for it. It was too

rich for me. I didn't want it. They needed to sell it. It got to where they ran out of money. There was no more money to pay the taxes and the upkeep or whatever. So they lowered the price to \$300,000. Well, big Ron came along, and he tried to get it for \$250,000. I was talking to Mike (Kephart) one day, and I said, you know, if he don't pay you \$300,000, I'll give you \$300,000. I opened my mouth, inserted my foot. I'll give you \$300,000. I was trying to get Ron to come up to \$300,000. I didn't want the place. Right.

Alan: But you wanted him to be fair about it.

Jake: Yeah. That's right. It was worth \$300,000. Well, he backed out on that deal. So we bought that place. You know, Mike had a bunch of dogs over there, and I told him I'll buy it, but the dogs had to be gone before I signed the paper. Whatever you got there, you take it and get it out of here.

Sharon asked me one day when it was before I started. She said, "Jake, would you help clean this place up?" I had a bulldozer. I said, Sharon, "all you have to do is talk to Mike. If he says I can clean it up, honey, I'll clean it up for you for free." And I will. That old trailer and all that mess. Well, I talked to Mike, and Mike said, "huh, all they want to do is make it look like Better Homes and Gardens." Well, I don't know, but if you're going to try to sell something and want to make it look halfway decent.

So anyway, I bought the place, and he got the dogs off, and I put the bulldozer in there, and I cleaned the place up. He hasn't hardly spoken to me since.

Alan Really?

Jake: No, sir.

Alan: Mike's a funny duck.

Jake: Yeah. And I found out that he's schizophrenic.

Alan: I didn't know that.

Jake: Yeah, well, he is. He is. One day they were logging that piece, the Miller piece right there, and the Kephart property comes out into that woods just a little bit. I mean, it's not even three-tenths of an acre. But there's some trees there. Not worth anything, but they were cutting, and they had put ribbons in there to where they go. And he went out with a shotgun and said, "don't you touch those trees in that corner. If you do, I'm going to shoot you." I mean, they stay way back.

Yeah. I mean, but you don't do that.

Alan: Kind of a rough attitude for a small thing that could have been solved just by saying, hey.

Jake: Well, it was clearly marked. And they were not going to go in there. But what got into him that evening, I don't know.

Alan: Was the old house still there? The one they dragged over when you bought it?

Jake: It's still there, but it's flat.

Alan: It just fell down?

Jake: No. I fell it down with my bulldozer. Actually, I meant to set it on fire. But the conditions were never right to be able to burn it without being seen. And I knew it was going to make a big fire. Yeah, that dry wood. So it's laying, and the old dry wood is probably still dry wood because all that metal roof was just, I've run across it with my bulldozer two or three times, and it's flat. It's flat. And the vines have grown all over it. So it's still there, but you wouldn't recognize it as that.

So back to Grandma and my daddy. He farmed this farm, and he came from Newport News. And Harvey Yoder, he said, well, I guess Tim Wenger probably told him, you know, we'd like to see you come back and farm, you know, take over for your dad because dad's not making the payments. He's not doing. So he talked to Harvey Yoder, and Harvey Yoder was a good friend. He had become a good friend and a mentor to my dad, and he was a very successful dairy farmer. And daddy said, "well, what happens if I go over and I just can't make it?" He said, Jake, "you'll make it. Jake, you'll make it."

And he gave him some old equipment that he had worn out, and he brought it over here, and he became sort of successful. But he liked messing with pigs, but he didn't like cows. He was not a cow man. He just, no. And so anyway, the mother and the girls would do the milking. And, you know, my sister Elsie said, "why in the world was he milking cows if he didn't like to milk them?" I said, well, yeah, he's got a bunch of kids, need something for them to do to keep them out of trouble." And anyway.

Alan: And that monthly milk check helped.

Jake: Yeah, that's right. A little bit of milk check. So when his mother died, they buried her in Pennsylvania. They carried the body back to Lancaster County. That's where she was from, and buried her in the Risser Cemetery. So mother was pregnant, and he said, "Well, you can't go to the funeral. You're too far from home, but you can stay home and milk the cows. You're not too pregnant for that."

So she stayed home with the kids, and he went to Pennsylvania to the funeral. Well, like I said, he farmed, and they made a living, scratched out a living. Just made the payments, paid the taxes. There was just never enough money around, and twice a month it was always, "well, what did you do with the money? You got a milk check. What did you do with the money?" Well, you got a whole house full of kids. What do you think the money went? Well, they had a hard time paying the bills, and anyway, they made through.

Well, then Catherine got married, and Viola got married, and they were close together in age. And Elsie got married within two years, and then Paul went to service, and Harold, he's a lazy sucker.

Alan Oh, really?

Jake: Huh? A politician, man. Shoot. You see him up at Hardee's with a big cigar. Huh?

Alan: I got to know and appreciate Harold from playing cards at Rodney's. And then later we, in fact, when he passed away a couple years before that, we played poker at my house every Saturday night.

Jake: Okay.

Alan: And I really got to appreciate Harold.

Jake: Okay.

Alan: I mean, his work ethic I knew nothing about. Right. But Harold himself, I just liked the rascal.

Jake: Right, right. Well, anyway, he said, "I ain't going to do all this work". I mean, all the work disappeared. And little Jakey, I just turned 13, and one night he went off and just didn't come home.

I never milked cows before. No, the girls and the boys, they did that work. I helped with the chickens and the pigs a little bit, not much, because the older kids, the big kids were doing the work. And I was a little scrawny rump. Well, my mother would take me to the doctor. "Dr. Harrington, what am I going to do with this little rump? I can't put no meat on his bones."

He'd just look at me. He said, "Well, what does he eat?"

"Well, all he wants to eat is fruits and vegetables and candy."

He said, "Miss Rosa, feed him all the fresh fruits he wants, fruits and vegetables he wants."

And, you know, did you ever hear of Hadacol?

Alan: Oh, yeah.

Jake: Oh, okay. Well, she decided that she was going to put some meat on my bones, so she found out about Hadacol. So she started feeding me Hadacol. Every day she fed me a teaspoon of Hadacol. Well, then she read the ingredients. It was 99% alcohol. I didn't grow any more like that. Never did. Never did catch up with the big kids. I don't know why.

Alan: Oh, Lordy.

Jake: So Daddy come upstairs that morning. It was in January. And Paul left home in December. And Harold, he just didn't show up. He went off one evening and didn't come home. And Daddy come upstairs and got me up.

He said, "Your brother didn't come home last night. I need somebody to milk the cows." I don't know anything about milking cows. And then when we got to the barn, he said, "You know, if you want to milk these cows, I'll help you, but I ain't going to milk them."

Well, they had gone through a real bad time. He bought a Guernsey cow from, I think it was Schloss. Anyway, he thinks that's where it came from. Well, Bang's disease was coming around, and he got Bang's disease in the herd, and he lost about, he lost better than half of the herd because they come around and tested, and if the cow tested positive, they put a big "B" on her jaw, and the only place she could go would be to slaughter. And they wanted the cow gone within, you know, just a couple weeks. She can't just stay here. And the state cleaned the state up from Bang's disease, but he lost a great part of his herd, and beings the kids were getting older, he didn't want to milk cows.

He started breeding the cows to Angus bull, so he didn't have any replacements coming on to replace the cows that we had to sell. Anyway, he said, "I'll help you, but I ain't going to milk these cows." Well, I started milking cows, and I just took a liking to it.

What's wrong with me? I just enjoyed doing it, and I enjoyed, I didn't do a whole lot of reading. I'm not a prolific reader. I can't see to begin with. I didn't know that I can't see until I was 40 years old. Now, I can see you, and I can read. If I really concentrate with my eyes, I'll be reading, especially when I'm a little bit tired, but when I just go over here somewhere, and I lose focus... or if I'm playing ball, strike at the ball.

What are you swinging at? Swinging at the ball. You're missing the ball. Well, I didn't know that I couldn't see the ball. I didn't know you could see the ball. I had a speckled dog. You could throw a ball or a frisbee or whatever, and she never missed. You know, just like a ball player gets his eye on the ball, football, whatever, and he's got it. No, when the ball, I could see the ball in the man's hand, the pitcher, and I might see it once or twice between the pitcher's hand and the bat. Otherwise, I didn't see it. Same thing with the ball coming to me. I hear the bat hit it. I can see it a couple times, and then when I need to focus on it, the one eye just popped over here somewhere.

Went to the eye doctor, and the eye doctor did a test, and he said, watch" my finger". Well, when a finger got down along here somewhere, one eye just popped off out this way.

He said, "You're a sloppy ball player, aren't you?"

I said, "Why do you say that?"

He said, "You can't see."

I didn't know I couldn't see, but I couldn't play ball.

But anyway, I just, and then I would read anything that I could find on cattle, and I become a real good friend of Melvin Wenger. Melvin was a cow man. He knew breeding and breeds and how to get milk out of a cow.

Well, Daddy say, “You can't feed them cattle with so much feed, you'll give them mastitis.” Well, how's come Melvin's cows are milking 50 pounds of milk a piece and mine are milking 35? Well, they're not being fed. You can't get something out you don't put in. It's just like trying to draw interest in the bank for money that you don't have. It don't work. So anyway, I just became, I became good at what I did.

I mean, and I will tell you that never a tank of milk went out of here that I wasn't proud of. Now, I had to dump two tanks of milk because I screwed up.

Alan: What happened?

Jake: Well, I milked a cow that I just treated with penicillin. I milked her right into the tank. And when I got almost through...I treated a cow that morning and Robert came in, my brother Robert came in...I had a sign on the door that said, it was a picture of a cow's udder. **This job takes udder concentration. So state your business and let me dairy on.** In other words, come in and tell me what you need and then carry your buns because I'm concentrating on what I'm doing. I can't do this and that at the same time.

Well, he come in and we're just having a good time. And I just put the milker on the cow and put milk in the tank. And then he left and I got thinking. Now that cow usually come in about middle of the way through the thing because they had a habit of doing the same thing over and over. And I didn't have it about 10 cows of milk. So I just stopped everything, went back out. Maybe, maybe she didn't come in. Maybe. And I knew better.

So I went back and looked all through the cows and sure enough, she had been milked. So I come up and finish milking the cows and dump all the milk down the drain. The whole tank of milk.

And one other time I did the same thing. And I had a red band on the cow's leg, but then I wasn't paying attention...They said that “dilution is a solution to pollution”. It's not so. If it's in there, it's in there. And my son, Eric, is allergic to penicillin. And if he gets penicillin, he has a bad reaction to it. It could kill him. It doesn't take but just a little teeny bit. So if I let that milk go down and say he didn't get it, but somebody else got it. That milk came from somewhere.

I never had a tank of milk that I sent out of here that I was ashamed of. And I'm a creature of habit. Keith said you could set your clock on when I cranked up.

Once I got in that milking parlor, I had a vacuum pump that didn't have a muffler on it. And that thing just sounded like a freight train. He said I could tell what time it was just by the sound of the milker coming on.

Alan: So after that, you handled all the milking?

Jake: Yeah. Well, my daddy would help. He'd carry milk and bring the cows in until I got where I could do it. And then Mark, let's see. Mark was nine years old. And he was almost as big as I was. But he's still Mark. Just tell you that way it is.

Alan: He didn't love the cows, huh?

Jake: No. He doesn't like to work. Just lazy. I mean, he got a track record in the community. Anyway, he helped some, and then Ken Miller helped some. After he moved back here, he worked for Daddy for about six months. And that didn't work out so well.

But anyway, I was the one that, yeah. He'd get me up. That winter, he'd get me up, send me to the barn to get everything put together and get the cows in there, and then he'd show up and carry milk for me. Because you had to carry, let's see. We were still putting it in cans at that time. And he carried it. I couldn't get the cans up into the milk, into the icebox. So I was doing the milking.

Well, I get started on time. If you don't get started on time, you don't get done on time. In the evening time, I come home from school, change my clothes, get something to eat, go straight to the barn. Because I wanted to have the milk from the cows by 4.30. If I got the milkers on the cows at 4.30, I could be back in the house and listening to Amo 'n' Andy. Or whatever. I just become a creature of habit. Always the same thing.

You just do it. No matter if you're sick or if you're well or whatever, just do it. I mean, my Daddy, before that, before the children left home, they kind of got behind on some of their bills, fertilizer bills, and he had pigs. So they started butchering pigs and taking to market. Mother built up a pretty good market, pretty good trade down on Brewer Street. She took the market over from Yoder. What was his name, Yoder?

Alan: I know who you're talking about. The Amish guy?

Jake: Yeah.

Alan: He was a friend of Junie Miller's. Harvey Yoder.

Jake: Yes. Harvey Yoder. Anyway, she took that over and they paid off a whole lot of bills. He'd slaughter hogs. They were slaughtering hogs here and grinding meat up and everything, taking to market. And then...

Alan: That was in that little square house just on the left of the lane when you come in, right?

Jake: They did that after the USDA came along and said, you can't do that. You have to be inspected.

Alan: Oh, they were just doing it out in the open? Like everybody did before.

Jake: Yeah. I mean, they didn't kill nobody yet. And they were clean with their stuff. They didn't... Anyway, because he understood bacteria. Then they had to be inspected where they processed it. So, they built the butcher house and put stuff in there that it was according to the USDA that you had to be inspected.

Well, they had to take the hogs down to Harrell Brothers. Well, they had a slaughterhouse down there where the prison farm is now. They had a slaughterhouse there. So, they'd take the hogs down and they had to have a stamp on them when they come back to show that they were inspected. Well, then they had to have an inspector present when they processed the meat. And this burned my mother up.

I mean, the inspector would come in and look around and collect his pay and he'd go on down the road. She said, "That ain't right. I'm paying that sucker to be here and..." And Daddy said, "Let the sucker go. We don't want him around anyway."

Well, this Boar's Head thing, the Boar's Head meat, it's not Boar's Head's fault. It's USDA's fault. They said there was water dripping on the walls. There was this, there was that. Where were the inspectors? Huh? No, it wasn't Boar's Head. These suckers are paid to make sure that that stuff is clean. You know, the inspector, well, I had a dairy inspector. I had a dairy inspector that was really tough.

The maddest I ever saw my daddy was one day when the man pulled his permit. But that's another story. But anyway, he got promoted. There was a dairy inspector up in Richmond, got sick or whatever and they needed a man up there so they made him do both. Well, Bob Daniels had a dairy herd up around Richmond somewhere, a big dairy herd, and he went and inspected. And something wasn't right. He gave him a big X. And come back next month, it was the same thing. You don't do that. If he leaves you an X, you fix it. So he went back next month and said, "Well, you know, you didn't do so and so. I'm going to give you 10 days. If you don't, I'm going to pull your permit.

And the man said, "Do you know whose herd this is?"

He said, "I don't give a, whose herd this is." If everybody else got to do it, he's got to too.

About a week later, he got promoted to an office job in Richmond. Now, for the rest of his career, he had to commute from Kempsville all the way to Richmond.

And in the meantime, I put up a milking parlor and he said what I wanted to do wasn't approved by the state. I was gonna put the milkers, it's like a washroom right in the milking parlor. And it wasn't approved. You had to carry them into the milk room when you get through milking and hook them up in there. Well, it was only \$50 a stall to put them right in the milking parlor. And I had a man that was doing the job was a little Italian guy. He wasn't bigger than nothing. And I had already told him, man, I want to do it. And the dairy inspector came along and said, well, you know what? That's not approved. And if it's not approved, you're going to have to blah, blah, blah, blah, blah,

blah, blah. It's going to cost me a lot of money later on.

And so I told him, and I said, "you know, my inspector don't want it. I ain't going to do it."

And that man just, I think he walked about a foot off the ground. He was hot. He said, "I'm going to put them in a another farm up in Amelia. There ain't nothing he can do about it."

So I said, "Well, go ahead and put them in."

He said, "I'll take care of it."

And you know, I don't know what he told the inspectors, but that inspector never looked at those things. Absolutely never. I mean, he'd inspect everything else. You could have cheese growing out the bottom of it. He wouldn't see it. So anyway, he got promoted.

Then I got a retired Navy chief come in. I think about the second time I met him, he said, "You know, Jake, I used to inspect an old Greeks house, old Greeks ice house." He said, "Every time I went there, I found a hundred dollar bill somewhere."

I said, "Cap'n, you better find that Greeks house because you ain't going to find no hundred dollar bill here. I ain't seen a hundred dollar bill in my life."

So anyway, they were processing hogs, and then she sold the business and there was a little bit of money there. Not a whole lot, not enough to hurt anybody. So she took that money and went to Haiti. . So they took the money out of the business. I mean, it was daddy's hogs. And it was okay, but it wasn't okay. That put the money back even further than it was.

So I was milking cows, I don't think we're milking about 15 at that time and I told Daddy one day, I said, "You know, we're getting up early and we're putting all this stuff together.. Why don't we milk a few more cows?"

"Well, how many cows do you want to milk?"

I said, "Well, enough to fill that tank up."

And that was another rub because about the time she came back from Haiti, the dairy decided that we're going to bulk milk now, not the cans. We're going to put it in a bulk tank. If you don't put it in a bulk tank, you can't sell to us. So he went out and spent a bunch of money for a bulk tank. Huh, got a Cadillac in the barn. Got a Cadillac in the barn. We got to pay for this Cadillac in the barn.

Alan: Who were you selling milk to then? Yoders?

Jake: Yeah. By that time he got hooked up with Yoders. He had been selling to the co-op. Anyway, one day he came, he went off to Richmond, found some cows. Actually, he went to the bank first and got some money. And he went to Richmond and he come home that evening. It was springtime, the days were getting longer. He said, "Are you through milking?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "No, you're not. I just bought 13 cows." So I put the stuff back together.

Alan: Whoa, doubled your herd.

Jake: Doubled the herd, yeah. Well, then things started getting a little bit better because we had a milk check coming in. Regular, you know, every month. And it was bigger. Yeah. So that's when they built that house over there.

You know, here's a little Jakey. He ain't no bigger than nothing. And I know he's going to be with me at least four more years. And he works like a nigger. And he just loves it. What's wrong with the dude? So, well, we come up here in the woods and cut pine trees and carried them down to... MacDonald... Mayo had a sawmill down there. And Uncle John from the western part of Maryland, up in there somewhere, up in them hills, came down and sawed the lumber for us to build the house. Robert Mast helped him with the foundation. Then he did a lot of the framing himself and Robert Mass helped some. But that's when he built that house. He got a loan for it. I think it was... I think he borrowed \$14,000 to build that house. And so then we moved that old old rat shack. You remember the old house? I mean, it was an old slave house. In fact, part of it's in there now. You know, the rafters are put together with wooden pegs. So when we tore the house down, we salvaged some of those rafters and the hand-hewn beams that were around it. Yeah, that's our history room in there. I don't know if you ever saw it. I'll show it to you. Anyway, so then the money started coming in and things got better.

And the only time I ever saw my daddy cry was the night I left to go to Beltsville. Stuff was being paid for. He bought another old tractor that I'd rebuilt, put back on the... And he said, "I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I'll keep it together for you if you want it." When I came back home...

Alan: You were there, what, two years?

Jake: But I didn't stay there but one year.

Alan: Oh, really?

Jake: Yeah, because I was rejected. I wasn't smart enough. The Vietnam War was going on and they were taking only high school graduates. Being I quit in the 11th grade. See, I'm the only one that ever, probably ever, told Brother Wenger that I wasn't going to do something. I went into his class and that year we had algebra. And about two weeks into algebra, I didn't have a clue what A equaled. And I didn't care. And I told him one day, I said, "Brother Wenger, you know, I don't understand it. I don't want it. And I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to do algebra. I'm just not."

"Does your papa know?"

I said, "I'm sure he'll find out".

So next Sunday, he talked to papa. And about a week later, he got me a business math book. And he taught me business math when everybody else was doing algebra.

Alan: Really?

Jake: He taught just me. He'd assigned so much. And I could do math. Not good at it, but I could do it. And so I had math. And I learned something. Business math, but I could have sat through that class and I don't think he ever failed anybody in algebra. If you sat through the class, he passed you. You didn't learn that. That's always been one of my things. If I'm just spinning my wheels, I don't want to do it.

Alan: He gave me a D minus. And told me that, "Alan, you really didn't pass, but you could have if you had wanted to." And that was the worst thing he could have done because later on I found out I had to teach myself that stuff.

Jake: I never needed it. Also, I am dyslexic. So I'll read something and well, if I go to write a serial number down, I'll have to write the first two numbers, stop, look at the number again, and get the next two or three numbers and write them down. I can't just read the whole number and put it in my brain and just write it back down. Don't work that way for me. So anyway, he gave me math, and then when I was in Great Bridge, the next year I went to Great Bridge, or two years later anyway, went to Great Bridge and never was good at English. I'm still not good at English. I love murdering the King's English. And it's okay.

Well, got into English class and had agriculture and I loved that. That was my thing.

Alan: Pierce teach that? Mr. Pierce?

Jake: Yeah. So, the next class was English and I got up at five o'clock and milked cows and had to get myself cleaned up and get to school. Had the agriculture and then I had English. It was a beautiful time to just take a nap. I sat in the back of the class and did you know Tink Warren?

Alan: Big heavy set fellow? Rround as a ball?

Jake: Yeah. Anyway, he had been in this English teacher's class the previous year. She taught freshman English and then the next year or anyway the one before junior English she taught that year and then the next year she taught junior English and this same boy was in her class. Well, he knew me. He knew where I came from. I didn't know him. I didn't know any of the boys. The boys were over here on Pocatoy Road. I didn't know those people. I mean, they knew me. They knew who I come from. But anyway, one day she talked to him and said, I don't know what I'm going to do with that Jacob Lehman. She said, "All he does is sleep. There's something wrong in his home life or something. I've got to find out what's wrong."
He said, "Mrs. Warren", or whatever her name was, he said, "Ms. Warren, by the time you get to school he's already done a day's work", and she never picked on me after that except one day I was sleeping and why, I mean, they didn't know any better but they put me in a class with football players, basketball players, these are people wearing the

jackets with the, you know, they are somebody. These are real people and I'm back there sleeping and she says," Jacob, Jacob," yeah. She said, "I don't mind you sleeping in my class but you have to stop snoring you're disruptin' my class."

Well, it wasn't long after that and she said, well, now, everybody's going to give an oral book report. Alan, I ain't never read a book... to that point. And so everybody else had given their book report and she said, she called me in front of... she called me up when the class was over and said, "When are you going to do your oral book report?" I said, "I'm not going to." I didn't talk in front of people. I just didn't. I mean, the thought just chilled me to the bone especially after that...you know, I'm snoring. Well, she said, "Well, your grades are not good enough to pass you if you don't." I said, "Well, I'm not planning on coming back this fall anyway," and I didn't and I've never been sorry for it. Never. And, and speak in front of people, no, uh-uh, never until, until the Lord saved me.

Alan: I was going to say, I know that you do and do well so that changed somewhere.

Jake: Well, it did. It did and that was, one Sunday morning the altar call was given and the preacher was saying, you have to have, you need a prayer time and, and Bible study.

Alan: Where was this?

Jake: This was up at the Mount Pleasant, the Methodist Church. They had a, uh, we had some godly people, some godly preachers there and then we had some that didn't even believe the Bible.

Alan: This was before Tom?

Jake: No, this was after Tom. This was a long time after Tom. Tom, Tom was there, uh, what was his name? He started, he started church up at the Mennonite school, for a while.

Alan: Did he take a bunch of them and go to Deep Creek and rent that church?

Jake: No, uh-uh. No. I don't, I don't think so. No, he was...

Alan: there was a preacher there after Tom who was semi-charismatic.

Jake: He was. That, that was one.

Alan: And he left there and started a church...and they rented the Deep Creek church for a while.

Jake: Okay. It could be.

Alan: Because some, some of the church, the Methodist folks went with him.

Jake: Right, that's right. Yeah, about, about a third or quarter. That would have been him. Anyway, he gave the invitation and I don't think I could have stayed in my seat if I tried.

Alan: Really?

Jake: No, sir. And when I got to the altar, I told the Lord, I want everything you've got. He said, to have everything I've got, you've got to give up everything you've got. You've got to be clean. You've got to be clean. And that changed my life and I've never been the same. Don't want to go back to what I had been. And I was a, I was a good sinner. I mean, I'm just as good a sinner as you could be. But a sinner, and I'm still a sinner, by the way. Don't, don't get me wrong because I'm not a saint.

Alan: But there was a difference.

Jake: Well, it, it made a difference in my life. And then, a man that I know, a dairy farmer up in Amelia County, notoriously crooked. Until he got saved and, and he turned around. Well, he, through a business deal, he found out about me and we, we got corresponding and talking and then he invited me to a lay witness retreat at his church up there. So, I decided to go and we went and he said, "Everybody's gonna have a opportunity to give their testimony." I'd never shared my testimony. Speak in front of people? I'm thinking, now, what in the world? I'm, I'm kind of trapped like a rabbit in a hole and it hadn't been too long since I'd run out of gas over the swamp with that airplane and a testimony?

Let me tell you about what God did for me. First, he saved my soul but then he saved me out of that tree. So, another person went first and then he said, "Well, Jake, look like you had something to say."

Well, uh, I did. So, I got up, I cranked that engine up, that thing and, and, I mean, I, I really hollered. I, I said, I cranked that engine up and the thing said, "EEEEEEEEEE." And, and I was loud that morning and the ladies had been in the kitchen fixing breakfast. They were still cleaning up. They were walking down the aisle and after church, after that was over, one of the ladies come to me and she said, "When you cranked that engine up, I thought the Holy Spirit got a hold of you."

I said, "He did. He did." So, that really started my speaking career right there and then the Gideons got a hold of me and they wanted me to speak in different churches and I did that.

I enjoyed that. But, I, I kind of fell out of, out of grace with them too because, well, I was certified to speak but then you have to be recertified and, my thing was...

Alan: As if you forgot?

Jake: Well, yeah. They want a very regimented, you have to... see, I go to the preacher and the preacher gives me five minutes or ten minutes. I got ten minutes and I put a watch up there so I get, when ten minutes is over, I'm over. I'm done. I'm gone. So, they want me to

tell about the white testament, the white testaments, they, they go to the nurses and the brown ones go to blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, Then they come out with cards, a card thing, you can buy a card for this and this this and this. By the time I get through with all that crap, there's no time left to tell about testimonies. The people want to hear about testimonies. I never got recertified. Tom Mercer was down at Hickory and I was invited to speak down there. Then the next year, he said, if you don't send Jake, don't send anybody.

It was the same thing with lay speaking. I was lay speaker for the Methodist church for about three years. I would fill in for pastors that were going on vacation or whatever. One of them had a charge and there was two churches on that charge down in Virginia Beach. One of them told them the same thing. If you don't send Jake, don't send anybody. But it wasn't me. It was the Holy Spirit. I can't, I can't speak.

I said all that to get back to what my Daddy, we were talking about my daddy in Canada, Mr. Esch told Daddy, he said, "Jake, we want you to lead the evening service."

He said, "I can't. I can't."

He said, "We don't want you to. We just want you to be available to God and Him speak. That's when he changed. That's when he changed. When he came home that summer, he was different. The colorful language disappeared. Well, it did. Actually, the language, it kind of disappeared before that time. But I think that's really when my daddy got saved. Now, was he saved before that? I don't know. I can't say.

But the Lord saw fit to leave him here until that time. Phil Miller had an experience after he left the Mennonite Church. Did he ever tell you about that?

Alan: Phil? Which Phil?

Jake: Martha's Phil. He and I never were close, but I don't know how it came about, but he was a great fisherman, and he found out, knew or whatever, that I like spot fish. Well, he went fishing. He caught some spot, and he brought them down. But what he come down for was to tell me what happened to him. When he left the Mennonite Church and went to whatever church he was, he changed. He was a different Phil Miller.

Alan: How so?

Jake: He told me, he said, "When I got there the Holy Spirit filled me." He told me right here beside the grapevine, why did he come to me? I don't know, but he did, and I appreciated that.

The other one was Roy Dickerson, Junior Dickerson. One day, I was plowing a ditch down on the Kephart Farm down on the other side, and this car drove in, and here was Junior Dickerson. I hadn't seen him in probably three or four years. He come and told me, he said, "Jake," he said, "I want to tell you about what happened to me." He said, "I was driving the truck down the road one day and a big light, and the Lord convicted me of

what I was doing wrong.” He said, “Right then and there I got saved.” He looked me up to tell me that, and I had gotten saved, and I purposely, because all he wanted to talk about is the things we used to do, and I want to put that under the blood. I don't want to go back and talk about, you know, we thought it was funny, but it wasn't funny.

Anyway, my dad was a different person when he came back, but back to growing up and working with dad, he had a shaving business. He delivered shavings. After I started milking cows, he started delivering shavings to horse people and whatever. He'd go to, over off of Five Mile Stretch or Princess Anne Road, there was a sawmill over there. Mr. Buckner had a sawmill, a great big pile of shavings, and he'd go there early in the morning and load up a load of shavings and take them to a horse farm here or a horse farm there, and that was his man money.

Miss Carroll used to question me about that. She said, “You know, we pay the insurance on the truck,” and it was, we were our partners, full partners, and we paid the insurance on the truck. We paid, the farm did. We put the gas in the truck, and we used the truck, some... anyway, but we never set up any proceeds from the..and it was okay. It was okay. The Lord blessed me anyway, and she said, “Well, you know, we're paying this, but he's....we don't see any money from it.” Well, it's okay.

So, then one day when he wanted to go to Canada, he told me one day, he said, “You know, we have all this tied up around here. We got this and this and this and this. Well, we don't have any money.” Well, it's all tied up. You know, we're making the payments, paying the taxes.

He said, “Well, your mother, your mother would like to have a new car.”

I said, “Well, buy her a new car.

He said, “With what?”

I said, “Go down and buy a new car and give me the payment book.”

The next day he had a new car, and two days later, I mean, two weeks later, I had a payment book. And then one day we're standing back by the feed bin, and he said, “You know, your mother would like to do a little traveling.”

“Well, okay.”

“Well, we want to go see her brother in Florida and her sister in California, and then we want to go to Canada.”

We're full partners. “Well, go ahead.” So they went to Florida and went to California, and I made the payments and sent them a check every...you know, we paid all the tax, kept everything going, and they asked him to come back and be house parents up there. And he told me later, he said, you know, I told him “If my boy is doing okay, we'll come back”. He said, “When I come back look to me like you're doing better than when I was there.” So they went back to Canada for another, what was it, six years, five or six years. Yeah, and we made the payments, sent the check to him every... just like when we were, when he was working.

Now, Robert (Lehman) took over the shaving business and still using the truck. I just let

it go. It was okay. I mean,

Alan: How did it come about that y'all became partners?

Jake: I was in Washington and working at Beltsville, and I learned a lot about cows and feeding up there too. And Harold decided that we should go in business together and become a corporation. And the only way we could get the checkbook away from mother was, I couldn't have done it. He could do it because he was mama's pet. He was a golden child. So we become, we become incorporated. But first thing we had to do is buy him a new pickup truck.

So we bought him a new pickup truck. They bought the corporation a new pickup truck. Then he had to take a vacation to go to Texas to visit a friend of his that was in the Navy. And guess what he took? He took the company's pickup truck and a full tank of fuel on the back of it to get him there and get him back. And he, I don't know if you ever had any dealing with him, but he...

Alan: Not financially, other than poker table.

Jake: Yeah. Well, he, (his attitude)... I can beat you out of it, I don't owe it to you. We had black people living in that old, the old shack, the old house. And they had a whole bunch of kids and those kids would just do anything. I mean, for a dollar, you know. And he'd say, "Hey junior, go over and feed the cows or do this or that." And the boy, he'd bust his buns to do, "I'll give you 50 cents." And the boy would do what he wanted him to do. And he'd come back, "I'll flip you for it. Double or nothing." And the kid was dumb enough until he'd get up to \$4 or \$5 and then the game was over. Boy didn't get nothing. Huh? He stole it from him. Just as sure as if he'd take a gun and take it out of his pocket.

Well, we become partners and he wanted to buy this and buy that. And, and we, we had a fertilizer bill at the end of the year that the man contacted Daddy and said, "You know, your son said he was going to... he'd taken it over. It's a corporation now. And, and this is, you know, we contacted him and we've not got any money." So we went down there and we signed a note to pay the bill, pay the fertilizer bill, sign a note with a bank.

And he, for him to go bankrupt was the thing to do. That's how you make money. Yeah. Stick you. Huh? You know, well, Dad and I dissolved the corporation. The corporation didn't work but a year and a half, but he wanted to buy a whole bunch of new stuff. I mean, you know, we're going to go big. And so what if you go bankrupt? What's, what's the big deal? Everybody does it. You know, at the same time, Womack, EC Womack, JC, you know, they were digging that pit over there and they go bankrupt and the next day they have a different name on the door and on down the road, they're doing business. It's called stealing. Don't care how you cut it.

So, then we formed a partnership between Dad and I, and we, that's how we worked together until...well, the deal was that after 10 years, 10 years, I could buy the farm at a

given cost that we stated when we started. Well, when it come time to do the deal, somebody said, now we had worked it and paid everything and he's been in Canada. And when I, when we first started working, he'd-a sold me everything, the house, everything for \$19,000.

I guess it was 20 years, 18 or 20 years later, after we had made the payments and everything for this period of time, we paid, and I, oh, half the cattle and equipment were mine. But when he went to Canada, I didn't let him sign any more notes. If I wanted to buy the harvester, I signed that note, but I got him to sign a deed of release in case I didn't pay it, they could come back and get it.

So anyway, when it come time to do the deal, then somebody said, "He's stealing from you." Because I was going to, he was going to finance about half of it, of what we, anyway, we ended up paying \$230,000 for his half and we assumed all the debt that was with it. So he ended up with a little bit of money and the estate did too.

But my mother said, "Well, do you care if I send a letter to everybody that says what we're doing?" Well, it was none of their business. They didn't milk them cows every day, they didn't plow the field every day, but I don't care. Just, but she said, "Well, get this, you sign it and that you understand it and you sign it and send it back."

Well, three didn't ever send it back. Well, then the deal was off.

So we decided to look at a farm in Alabama and I did a lot of research and I went down there and spent a week down there and I was trying to get trying to get 3% government money and the first bank I went to, I wanted a million dollars. That's all I wanted. This is back in mid seventies.

Alan: When a million dollars was a million.

Jake: Yeah. Just before Jimmy Carter came into office. Anyway, went to the first bank. I had to be turned down by three banks (to qualify for the government loan). Went to the first bank. He said "Oh yeah, I think we can do that." Oops. Well, anyway, we came back home and dad took me aside and said, "Well, we really want you to buy it. I really want you to buy this farm and I'm going to go through with the deal." But somebody had said, you're not going to finance any of it. In other words, I'm going to have to come up with the whole deal. If I don't, the deal's off.

Well, what somebody didn't know was that I already talked to several bankers. And he said, you got 90 days to do this deal. And somebody knew, being as I had put up a harvest store and put up a milk parlor and spent money here and spent money there, they knew that I couldn't finance that kind of money. But it was already there.

God did it. But within 45 days we had done the deal and the mouth was hung open. So then, oh yeah, by the way, one day he come to me and said, well, your mother would like

to have a house up here in the woods. So we built a house and the farm had the payment book, so we paid for it. And while they went to Canada, they rented it out to somebody else and we never saw any money. Sounded like a pretty good deal, didn't it? And all of that, it wasn't what we did. God did it. I mean, and I just love to work. What's wrong with me?

Alan: Hard work and some smarts make a difference too.

Jake: I was just thinking about the work that I did. I built my own liquid manure system. We had liquid manure and the only way I could fix it, work it, was with a shovel. And do you know how much a hundred cows can put out? It's a ton of it. And the dairy inspection said you got to clean it up every day. So I did a lot of shoveling.

But in this Hoard's Dairyman, they had an article that said this Canadian built his own liquid manure pump. And I said, if this Canadian can do it, I can do it. So I started buying some junk and I started welding stuff together and putting stuff together and my daddy looked at me and said, "That won't work." Somebody else come along and said, "No, I'm afraid that ain't gonna work." Well, the man said it worked. Why would it work for him, wouldn't work for me? So I kept on putting together. It took me about a year and a half.

I did that on my spare time. And finally I got it put together and I put it in the pond. And that sucker pumped water like you wouldn't even believe. Actually that same design, when I got it finished, would pump 3000 gallons a minute.

Alan: That's a lot of water.

Jake: That's a lot of water, a lot of poop. Yes, sir. But then we had a lot. I mean, once I dug that, I put in a 20 by 20 underground tank, eight foot deep. And Uncle Melvin (Wenger) said, "It won't work. It's got to be round."

Alan: Why?

Jake: I don't know why. Well, anyway, I built it just like I wanted to build it. And I used it for about 25 years. I don't know if it worked or not, but I used it that long. But then that got too small. So I dug me a pond out on the backside and I pumped it over into that pond. And in the spring and fall of the year, that held three quarters of a million gallons. I made me a manure spreader. It held 3000 gallons. And I'd go in there and haul one load at a time. Well, then I got rich enough, I made me a second one so we could haul with two. It wouldn't take quite as long. But all that stuff, actually, all that equipment that I built would have totaled about three quarters of a million dollars.

Alan: If you went out and bought it new.

Jake: Yeah. And it would rust out just as fast as mine did. And that pump, the original pump, lasted for 30 years. I had to replace the shaft on it. And I had, actually, the only thing that

was left to it that I didn't replace was the pipe out of it. The rest of it had been replaced. And the gearbox. But where did I get the time to do all that?

Alan: All you did was work. It was recreation and your...

Jake: Well, it was. And Miss Carroll said, you know, everybody wondered if she was a single mother. She'd take the boys to the ballgame. Jake ain't there. Take the girl dancing and Jake ain't there. I'm milking them stinking cows.

PAUSE - 1 13

Alan: What's the first thing you remember? Your earliest memory?

Jake: The first thing I remember, Aunt Sarah dying. My Aunt Sarah died. That's the first, really, the first memory that I have. Do you remember, Sarah?

Alan: Yeah, I remember her dying.

Jake: Okay, because you live right down the road from her.

Alan: Right, we were next door neighbors.

Jake: Right, that's right. Well, that was one of the hard parts of my life. Because Janice and I were only a week apart in age. And we were together a lot. We played together. And anyway, she was either down here or I was up there. And when Aunt Sarah died, her dad, well, he remarried and they moved to, over to Delaware.

Alan: What was Tommy like?

Jake: Thomas? Oh, he was a big man. And really all I remember is what people tell me about him. And he was less than kind, is what I know. I don't remember him very much.

Alan: Yeah, I don't either. I mean, I remember who he was. And I recognize his pictures. It was the children I was around, not him.

Jake: Aunt Sarah had a hard time. I don't know if he ever, I don't know if he gambled or not, but he never had any money. It was never, it was never enough to go around, is what they say. But then when she died and they moved away, and you know, I didn't see Janice for about seven years.

And one day, I was working on an old feed mill. I had altered the thing and I was making it to do a different job. And I was out there just as dirty as I could be, rolling around in the dust and the dirt. And this young lady showed up, the most beautiful young lady I'd ever seen. I hadn't paid attention to girls. I just didn't, you know, I didn't have time to.

And in the meantime, she'd been in a bad car accident. She had split her face and she had a big scar. And when I saw the scar, I realized who she was. But then we reconnected and

we spend some time together now. Every once in a while we go over there or they come down here or whatever. But like I said, Thomas, not so much. But Aunt Sarah, you know, she died in childbirth. And I remember, and every Christmas, the song and Harold Buckwalter, I think it was Harold Buckwalter, but I know it was Abe Buckwalter, they sang at her funeral. And one of the songs they sang was, "On Angel's Wings, Oh Bear Me Away." And every time I hear that, that brings tears to my eyes. Because I remember that so plainly. The funeral was in the old house. So that's what I remember of that.

Alan: I've been told that the Lord didn't take Sarah. He rescued her. But I was so young, what do I know?

Jake: But being that she was my aunt... And she was quite a bit different from my mother. Mother was a...

Alan: She was a go-getter.

Jake: I tell people she could back lightnin' right up a tree. Here's the thing, Edith Harrison, they lived on the airfield road, and mother had some chickens. And she sold eggs. And the people would come up and get eggs. And one day she came up here and she was wearing shorts. And Mama said, you go home and get some clothes on. Edith turned around, went back home, and put some other clothes on. Well, Mama knew Daddy liked to look at the ladies. I mean, Daddy was a ladies' man, okay. Ain't no doubt about it. Anyway.

Alan: Yeah, there's a picture, an old picture of your dad as a young man standing on a wagon with a whole bunch of women on the wagon. He looked as happy as he could be.

Jake: And he was. Yeah, he was. So it wasn't long after that until John Kennedy was shot. And mom didn't have a television. She wanted to see the funeral. went over and knocked on Edith's door. "Edith, can I come in and watch the funeral?" Edith, let her come in and watch the funeral.

Alan: Do you remember much about school at Mount Pleasant? Do you remember your first day?

Jake: I do remember the first day. No. I remember a teacher. Lenora Wenger, was our teacher. And I remember that we sang the same song for about a month. So we learned that song. And whenever I come across those songs, I can still sing those songs without a book.

Alan: Had Sidney Wenger tell me the same thing about a year ago.

Jake: Really?

Alan: Yeah. So when he hears a song, he knows that's Mrs. Wenger song.

Jake: That was one thing. And another was that I never was sent to Brother Wenger's room.

You know, that was a thing if you got in trouble in Lenore's room and she'd send you to Brother Wenger. And I don't know what Brother Wenger did, but he put the fear of God in you.

Alan: He just had to look at 'em. I've often thought if God doesn't look like Brother Wenger, he should.

Jake: Well, and then I remember also spelling. I just never could spell. I mean, even today I can't spell. And takin' spelling, you know, you have to write down. And I just couldn't spell. And if you couldn't get some of them right, you had to stay in at recess and learn those words. I can remember right now that if I hadn't quit school, I'd still be in that room studying those words. Never woulda learned 'em. But I found out that some of the people weren't learning the words. I mean, I didn't go looking for it, but I found out that what you did was, you write down the words, the correct words. And then when you go to pass paper, and you just switch papers. So you can make a passing grade.

Well, the first time I did it, I was going to turn that paper in. And something told me... he had called them out. I learned how they were. He called them out, not in order. He just mixed one or two of them up. So when you turn your paper in, if you had them written in order, he caught you. And that week, Joy Wenger had gotten one wrong, and she was bawling like a baby. And I was just about to get a 95%. But I didn't. So he called everybody that had cheated, and he said, "Jacob, I want to see you too." So I confessed that I had done that, but I didn't turn it in. And he knew that I hadn't because I got half of 'em wrong. But he figured he was going to catch me in the dragnet. But anyway, never could spell. And I remember that.

And I remember that every day he ate a grilled cheese sandwich. I had to sit there and watch him eat, but I'm supposed to be spelling, doing spelling. He gave me five minutes to eat my lunch and do the spelling. So here I am watching him eat his grilled cheese sandwich. I guess I had as good a relationship with him as anybody did. Brother Wenger and I...I told him one day that there was something I'd just never do.

Alan: Algebra?

Jake: No, no, not that. But just something he was talking about. Anyway, it had to do with morality. And I said, well, I'd never, I'll never do that. I promise I'll never do that. And whatever it was, I never did. I don't remember exactly, but that was some of the remembrance. And yeah, but just the singing, you know, you sing the same song and you sang it and you sang it and you sang it. Not two or three songs, just the same one until you learn.

Where is Sidney now?

Alan: He's living out near Chic's Beach. He's retired... retired five, six, seven, eight years ago.

Doing nothing. But he's still in good shape, good health.

Jake: Okay, good.

Alan: I see him every now and then.

Jake: Yeah. And Preston?

Alan: Preston's still working.

Jake: Oh, is he? Still plastering?

Alan: Still plastering. I don't think he does any himself, but he's still running the company.

Jake: He got a crew.

Alan: Yeah. He and Sidney were partners and when Sidney quit, he just kept on going.

Jake: Took it over and went on with it.

Alan: He's down in Ghent somewhere. Same place he's lived for years.

Jake: Okay. Some people I run into every once in a while, but then other people that just fell off the face of the earth. I've taken to going to the grocery store with Miss Carol twice or three times a month. Well, I like fruit, fresh fruit, and I still do, by the way, from when I was a kid. With our insurance, I found out that I get \$120 a month to spend on food, anything in the food. I found that out, it was the end of the month. I mean, it was just like the last five or six days a month that I had \$120 to spend. I said, "Well, honey, we're going to spend that money and we're not going to let it get away anymore."

We get that much, but it doesn't roll over the next month if you don't spend it, you lose it. A couple of times a month, and I run into a lot of, I got to say old people, people that I've grew up with or went to church with. I don't know if you remember Harold, they went to church with us for a long time.

Alan: Is he a Virginia Beach cop?

Jake: No, no, no, not that Harold. I know who you're talking about. He is married to one of the Heitman girls. Well, I've seen them a couple of times, and she and her sister that lives right close to where their dad lived. I see her once in a while, but I saw this couple, Barnett, Harold and Ola. Harold and Ola Barnett. And he's got Alzheimer's. He's still functional, but we were talking to him, and he repeated the same story about four different times. But she looks good.

He's going down the road one day, and they saw some cows over in the field. He said,

“Look at that, isn't that pretty? Those cows over there lowin’.” So when they come to church that Sunday he said, “Mr. Jake, what does cows lowin’ mean?” He said, “I saw these cows out there, and told Ola that they were lowin, but what does lowin’ mean? I thought he meant they're laying down. No, no, no, no, they're bawling. If they're lowin’ they're bawling. Something is definitely wrong, because cows don't bawl if they're fed and watered, and they're milked on time they don't do no bawling. But if they're not taken care of, they'll let you know.

Alan: But I have a suggestion. If you've got a Sunday morning you're free, try Mount Pleasant Mennonite once. It's a different church.

Jake: Is it?

Alan: Absolutely. I mean, with the trouble with Sam Skaggs and so forth, it lost a lot of people. It's a smaller church now, but the people that are there... Sharon Kephart moved back here from Carolina, and we were just talking with her, and I asked her where she was going to church, where she was planning to go when she came back. And I said, “Well, you ought to try Mount Pleasant Mennonite.”

“No, I've been a Baptist all these years, and I know the Mennonites. I'm not going to try it.” She did. She's still there. She moved her membership. Richard, the same thing.

Jake: You know, Betty Vanderploeg?

Alan: Yeah, she started going there.

Jake: Yeah, she told me that. When I was farming that farm right across the road from her, that's when I got to know her. I'd see her out in the yard, I'd stop and go over and talk to her. Then I found out that she had cancer. And so, I promised to call her. I call her every once in a while and talk to her, and she told me that she's going to the Mennonite church now.

Alan: I don't know why, but she is. We're glad to see her.

Jake: Bobby died. And that was her life. She had other friends. I mean, she had a lot of friends, but that was her life. And he's gone.

It's kind of like when Mom was living, there was always somebody here. They had company in here all the time. I mean, if I wanted to come and talk to them, I had to pick my day, because there was always, literally, there was always somebody here. And after Mother died, I made a comment to Dad. I said, “You know, there's not as many people visit you as you used to.”

He said, “No. and the phone don't ring as much as it used to since your Mother passed away.” And so it's the same thing with Betty.

You know, there were two. And for whatever reason, people feel uncomfortable talking to people. And, you know, she got cancer. And I was looking for a watermelon one day... actually, I went into Food Lion, and there was Betty. And she's friends with the manager there, the lady manager. And when she saw me, she just gave me a great big hug. And then we got talking with the manager. And anyway, then when I came away, I have a very keen sense of smell. I could smell a cow when she was sick. I'm serious. Acidosis, acidic. I could smell it. Anyway, when I left the store, I could smell the chemo from Betty. I mean, it has a distinct smell because I know because I had it. And they had given me that stuff too. I stay in touch with her once in a while, but not real often. Probably not as often as I should. But she told me that she was going to the Mennonite Church.

I think about that, you know, when I go by there Sunday morning. The Sunday school has just started. We pass by there at 930. Our Sunday school won't start till 10 o'clock. And I think about that. And I also think about the Methodist Church up here.

Alan: You there a lot of years.

Jake: 39 years we were there. And if it hadn't been for that situation, I wouldn't have left. I had no intention of leaving. If anybody needs a person to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, that church does. I mean, I don't know. We stopped there once in a while. And I did one Sunday morning. And the preacher come out and said, "Ain't no funeral here today." The only time I see him is at a funeral. Ain't no... "Jake, there ain't no funeral here today."

Alan: You know, the preacher you were talking about that was a little charismatic and left. He was there when we moved back. Linda and I moved to Richmond.

Jake: Okay, I didn't know that.

Alan: She was home sick. So she came back after six months. And I continued to work in Richmond. And so I'd still be home on the weekends. But I worked in Richmond for the next five years and came home on weekends and sometimes once or twice in the middle of the week. But anyhow, usually on Sunday morning, I didn't really want to go to church because I'd been out all week and so forth. But she started going back right away. She had been Sunday school superintendent when she left. And that was under Tom (Mercer). Well, this new guy, he found out she'd been Sunday school superintendent. So he put her back as Sunday school superintendent.

And everything was fine. And then... I don't remember what it was, but some theological question came up. And he was wrong, in my opinion. And she was right, from my memory at the time. And she refused to budge and said, no, that's not scriptural. And so he fired her. Not only fired her, removed her from the Methodist church.

Well, when I moved back down here, we started going to Hickory because Tom was

there, so we decided we'll transfer our membership. I mean, since we're going to Hickory every Sunday, we'll transfer our membership from Mount Pleasant to Hickory.

Well, he could transfer me. Oh, Linda's not a member. Tom said, "They can't do that. The preacher can't take your name off the roll."

I said, "Well, you remember when she joined the church? "

"Yeah. Yeah, I know. It was on the roll. Ain't there no more. I don't know what happened." he said, "but she's got to go through the whole rigamarole again."

I just, well, here's Linda, probably the most godly and holy woman I've ever met in my life. And she got kicked out of the Methodist church.

Jake: That's sad. Well, then I went to the, we started going to the Baptist church. And to be a Baptist, you had to be baptized.

Alan: Immersed, yeah.

Jake: Okay. So I resisted that, but then I wanted to join that church so I had to be baptized, but I said, "I'll do that. But you'll have to let me say a few words before I do." The only time I spoke from behind that pulpit, the whole time I was there, I told them, I said, "you know, I'm going to submit to immersion baptism, but I'm going to tell you, I was already baptized. I'm doing this to join your church, not because I need to be baptized. I was baptized way back yonder." And so anyway, then we joined that church and it wasn't long until he had let another preacher come in and he wasn't preaching, wasn't teaching what this pastor, and this is independent. So you have that church, he is the boss. Well, They kicked him out. But then about a third of the congregation went along with him. Well, there went the money and they had a preacher and assistant preacher.

And so the assistant preacher stepped back. So he didn't take a salary and the preacher went on vacation, come home and he had about six inches of water in his house. The water heater had burst. And so he was, and at the same year, his daughter got married, was getting married. And they had, they gave him a salary, but then the bank they were with wouldn't take withholding. So they gave him a check. He had it to take to his bank and get it cashed and take the cash over to the other bank to pay the tax. Well, he needed the money, so he just didn't pay the tax.

He borrowed it. And then the only deacon we had got a letter that the church property had been seized for non-payment of taxes. So they confronted the man and he was in the process...anyway, he paid it all back. But they dismissed him that morning, that Sunday morning. I went to church that morning and then they dismissed him. And then the deacon they had came to me and said, "Jake, would you teach adult Sunday school class today?" So I did. I was going to preach. I was going to have a sermon for the nursing home that Sunday anyway. So the people that were there, they got double dose that Sunday. And so I started teaching that class. And I taught that class for six years.

And then one Sunday, well, then we got a new preacher. And he decided to take some of

the people and start a younger people's class. I had the old people. And he decided to take some of the people and start his own Sunday school class. Well, they went into his class and they'd stay a week or two. And then they'd come back to Mr. Jake's class. He didn't have a class. I mean, they wouldn't stay. They liked Mr. Jake's teaching. I mean, I'm just an old farm boy. And I taught the scripture just like as close to like Jesus would. He talked about the birds and the flowers in the field and things that people understand. You know, so anyway, I was teaching and he came and was sitting in my class. He did that occasionally anyway. He's sitting in my class.

And I always, if I had five minutes at the end of the lesson, I'm not going to let you get away. I'm going to give you five more minutes worth. And that particular morning, I was saying about the Holy Spirit. If you're God's child, if you get out of His will, he will send the hounds of heaven after you and drag you to the woodshed and beat you within and inch of your life. Now, if you're the devil's child, you won't get chastised because you're not His.

Well, I turned around to put my lectern away and the preacher come up behind me. "Where do you find that in the Bible?" Well, not in the Bible per se. It's in there because that's...and he says, "Well, I've heard you say other things too that's not scriptural, not biblical."

I said, "Such as?"

He said, "Well, you say that the Lord spoke to you."

I said, "Well, he has spoken to me. I mean, not an audible voice out of heaven, but the Holy Spirit was my spirit.

Anyway, Carol had heard it and so I put that away and the next Sunday I taught the Sunday school class and then I told 'em that I was resigning. I'm not going to teach your Sunday school. I'm not teaching. I never said why, never. But then he said, "Oh, oh, can't you teach a couple more?" No, I resigned the class. It's just that simple. So then he got somebody else to teach Sunday school class. So I'm not a Sunday School teacher, and I was also a deacon and they undeaked me too, but that's okay.

So I'm not, when I was teaching Sunday School, that's the reason I stopped speaking for the Gideons because, well, that was one of the reasons because I couldn't be there and speak at another church at the same time. So I'm, but those are my people, but my people are still down here at Mount Pleasant and up at Mount Pleasant.

Alan: Stop by some Sunday just to visit.

Jake: I might do that.

Alan: Even Sunday school.

Jake: Who's teaching Sunday school?

Alan: Is between Richard Kephart...he's on fire. And Nina Troyer. And Bob... I don't know why

I can never think of their name because they're at our house once a month. He's the school principal's husband. He wasn't raised Mennonite. He was raised in Norfolk at that church that owns a triple R ranch. But he is very, very conservative.

Jake: Okay. No, I've heard, I've talked to Richard. I haven't talked to him recently, but years back that he was on fire for Lord then.

Alan: Oh, his wife is crazy. She goes up to complete strangers and wants to know how they are.

Jake: Well, that's kinda like me.

Alan: She's as sweet as she can be.

Jake: And I ask the Lord every day to send someone across my way that I can witness to. Every day, every day. And that's one of the things I pray every day and very seldom, very seldom that there's not somebody. I have to be in my deathbed because I just meet people no matter where you go... to 7-Eleven, in the food store. Of course, I don't get to the parts store as much as I used to, but yeah, that's just who I am. I hope you found something that you can use.

Alan: Oh, it's not for me. This is for future generations who won't even know what you look like or care, but they'll listen to it and hear it and get something about the background.